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International Honesty and Honor.

We were moved to write all sorts of severe things when the despatch came from Pekin, apparently authoritative, that Russia had made demands on China in regard to the control of Manchuria that involved violation of all her pledges to China and the powers. We felt, however, the exceeding improbability of the truth of the report, and concluded to wait.

If the report had been true in its more serious features, Russia would have been guilty before the world of the most shameless lying and deception, and would have deserved the excoriation which she has received in many quarters since the report. It has been generally believed that all her promises to evacuate Manchuria have been mere ruses, and that not one of them had any sincerity in it. This has not been our view.

One cannot believe anything of a nation worse than that she is guilty of deliberate, studied falsehood for selfish ends. Diplomatic lying is as base as individual lying, and much less excusable. There is nothing more dishonorable to a nation and ultimately more degrading and ruinous. England's frightful lying about the Boer people would scarcely have been possible had she not trained herself in the art for many years previously, especially in the matter of

her promise to evacuate Egypt. Whatever gain may have come to Egypt by her control has been more than lost to England herself and to civilization by the degradation of character that has befallen her from the persistent falsehood which she has been enacting. There is one very praiseworthy thing to be said of American diplomatic dealing with other countries: whatever criticism of it may be made in other ways, it has always been truthful and straightforward.

If Russia had proceeded, or moved to proceed, toward China and the powers as this report from Pekin indicated, she would thereby in the present juncture of her foreign relations have immeasurably dishonored herself and undone practically all the good accomplished by her two great recent moves for the promotion of a higher civilization. The dishonor would have been all the greater because of the Hague Conference and the recent proclamation of religious liberty throughout the empire.

Is it possible that she was blind to all these considerations? That she had no diplomatic self-respect? That she would boldly have thrown to the winds all her pledges to China and the United States? That she would have flung herself into the certain danger of war with England and Japan? There were, doubtless, Russian statesmen both in the East and at St. Petersburg who would readily have done this. But the responsible government of the empire, which is not made up of fools, could not, in our judgment, have done anything so insane and certain of failure. We therefore felt sure when the report came that there was some mistake about it.

Russia — we do not believe her to be yet any too saintly — undoubtedly would like to annex Manchuria, a valuable piece of territory, but undeveloped and loosely related to China, and she would take it over at once, probably to the great advantage of the country, if she were free to do so, — free, that is, from her connections with and obligations to others. But with all these upon her, the course outlined in the disturbing dispatch from Pekin was impossible. It is curious, under the circumstances, that the report was so wholly and universally believed. But this is only another evidence of one of the deepest remaining weaknesses of our civilization — the readiness to believe everything bad of peoples as of individuals, and on the slightest ground to indulge in all sorts of international detraction and slander.

It turns out, fortunately, that all the more serious